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ADM-1

3 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Basic Authority for CIA Conduct of Overflight  
Reconnaissance Operations

1. This memorandum is for information.
2. There is no basic NSCID or other general directive which specifically covers overflight reconnaissance activities except for the general provisions of NSCID #5 which give CIA primary responsibility for the conduct of clandestine intelligence activities abroad. Being intelligence collection activities, reconnaissance overflights come within the general area of the Agency's responsibility

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3. On 5 November 1954 the Technological Capabilities Panel ("Land Panel"), Office of Defense Mobilization, submitted to the DCI a report indicating why overflight of the Soviet Union was urgent and advisable and why that activity was "appropriate for CIA, always with Air Force assistance." On 24 November 1954 the DCI prepared recommendations for the approval of reconnaissance overflight requirements and for the Secretary of the Air Force and the DCI to establish a collaborative program for procurement of the aircraft and equipment and for them to conduct reconnaissance overflights in such a way as to reduce the risk of involvement of the U. S. to the minimum practicable. On 24 November 1954 the President approved the reconnaissance project in a meeting at the White House.

4. The Bureau of the Budget at first objected to procurement of airplanes by CIA but eventually agreed on the grounds that only CIA could provide the necessary security and proceed with the urgency required. An agreement on the U-2 program between the Air Force and CIA was signed on 3 and 4 August 1955, providing

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specifically that the line of command would be direct between operational units and the CIA Project Director. The OXCART concept was endorsed by the President's Science Advisory Committee in 1958, and an agreement on the operational aspects of OXCART was signed by the Air Force on 15 February 1960 and by CIA on 18 February 1960. This again specified that the line of command would be direct between operational units and CIA. Project CORONA was authorized by the White House on 15 April 1958, and the responsibility was assigned to the Advanced Research Projects Agency, DOD, for general management of the vehicle development; to the Air Force Ballistic Missiles Division for detailed technical supervision of the vehicle development and operations; and to CIA for development of reconnaissance equipment and for management of collection requirements, security, cover and operations. In a memorandum of 7 July 1959 ARPA and CIA agreed on Agency responsibilities for Project ARGON and specifically that "in order to obtain maximum security, it is essential that CIA exercise control of ARGON."

5. In addition to the foregoing actions in the Executive Branch, CIA Subcommittees of the Congress have all confirmed the desirability of CIA control of these projects.

s/ Lawrence R. Houston

LAWRENCE R. HOUSTON  
General Counsel

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